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hildren are moldable, resilient and impressionable. To grow into healthy, law-abiding adults, their needs must be met. If they experience second-hand violence in an abusive home, those needs escalate. But officers can help.

Former officer and domestic violence expert Mark Wynn told a story about a 5-year-old little boy who, separated from his mom and dad, had an eye-opening discussion with the responding officer.

"The little boy looked up at his gun and said, 'Is that the gun you're going to shoot me with?'" Wynn said. "The officer said, 'No, son, we don't shoot little boys.' The boy said, 'Are you going to shoot my mommy with that gun?' Here is an opportunity to not just stop the violence immediately, but to leave a lasting impression on a child who might one day be a police officer."

Wynn knows all too well how law enforcement intervention in domestic violence cases can affect children in the home.

"My mother's second husband, a guy who didn't look too bad at first, was a serious abuser," Wynn said. "There were five kids in our family, I was the youngest of five. He was physically abusive with all of us. He nearly killed my mother several times, caused miscarriages, pushed her out of speeding cars. I grew up trying to survive all of that, and it was only by the grace of God and a strong mother we were able to get out."

Wynn got the chance to see how law enforcement in the late 1950s and 60s dealt with domestic violence.

"Officers would come to the scene, and I would stand on the front porch with my mother," he said. "I was 4 to 6 years old and the big officers would look at my mother and say, 'If I come out here one more time I'm going to lock you up and take your kids away.'"

"I heard those same things said to victims, and I understand why they did it," Wynn continued. "There were no laws, training or policies. The nature of people in law enforcement is not generally people who hate people or you can't do this work. I know they don't. But the leadership should set the example of, 'Don't be frustrated, let's look for solutions.'"

Statistics collected by the Abuse, Rape and Domestic Violence Aid and Resource Collection indicate that one-third of children who witness the abuse of their parent suffer from significant behavioral and emotional problems. Among them are sleep disruption, excessive crying, anxiety, stuttering and problems at school. Boys who witness the abuse of their mother are more likely to be abusive as adults, while girls may be more tolerant of abuse as adults than those who do not witness domestic violence in their homes. >>